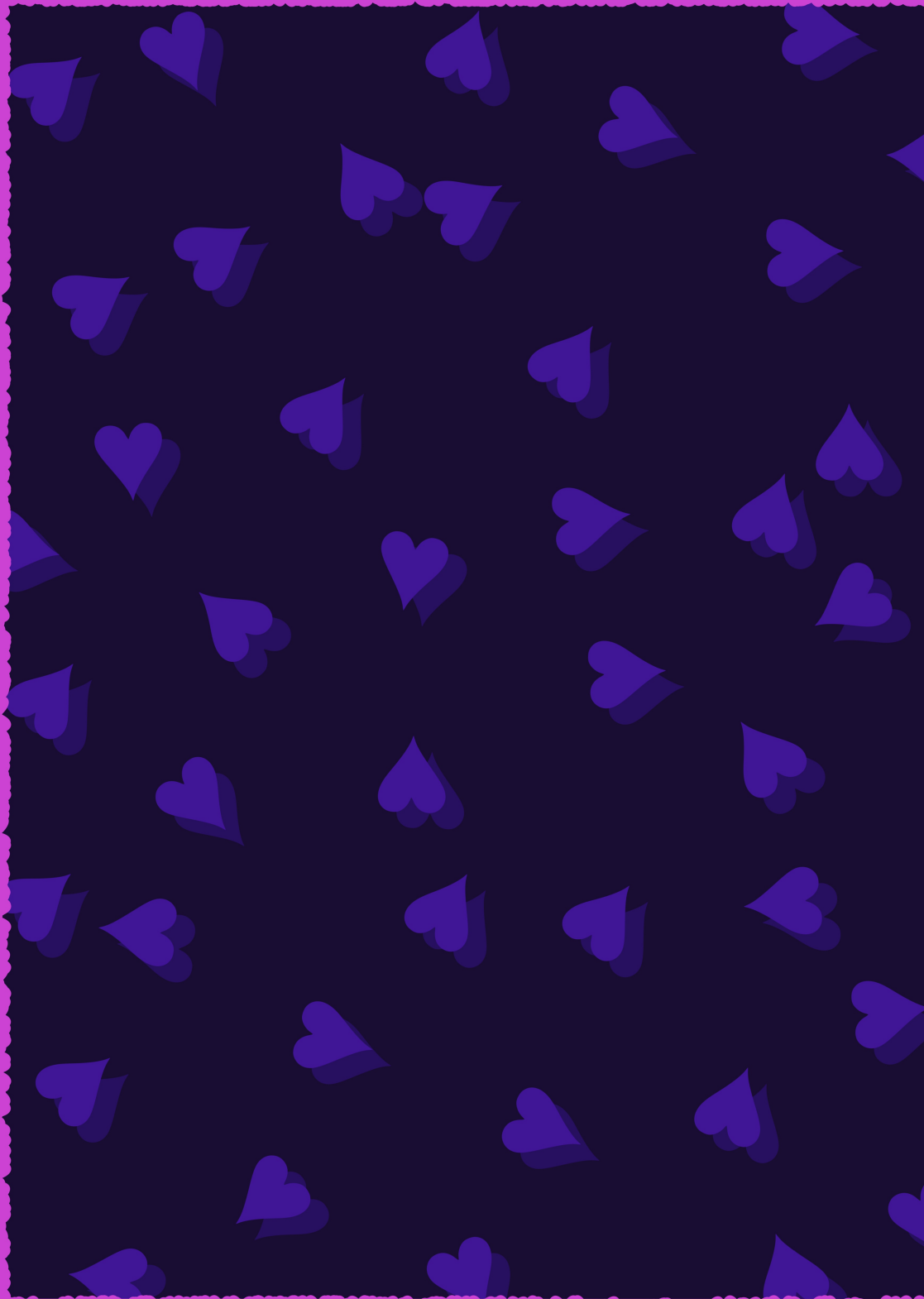




Love

Struck
A MATESPRITSHIP QUADRANTS ZINE

2025
1/4/20
A. MATESPRITSHIP



Thank you for downloading this zine!

*I'm so excited and proud to see this project succeed!
Thank you again to everyone who participated and
make sure to support all of our awesome creators!
They worked so hard and did such an awesome job!
I hope all of you will enjoy it just as much as I do!*

*Please respect the artists and DO NOT repost, print,
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- [SB]

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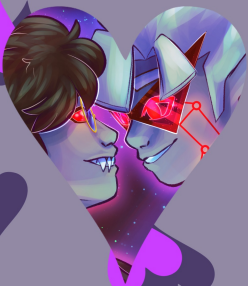
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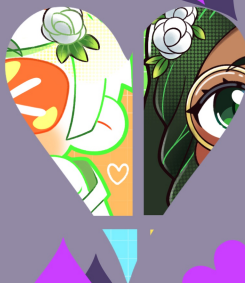
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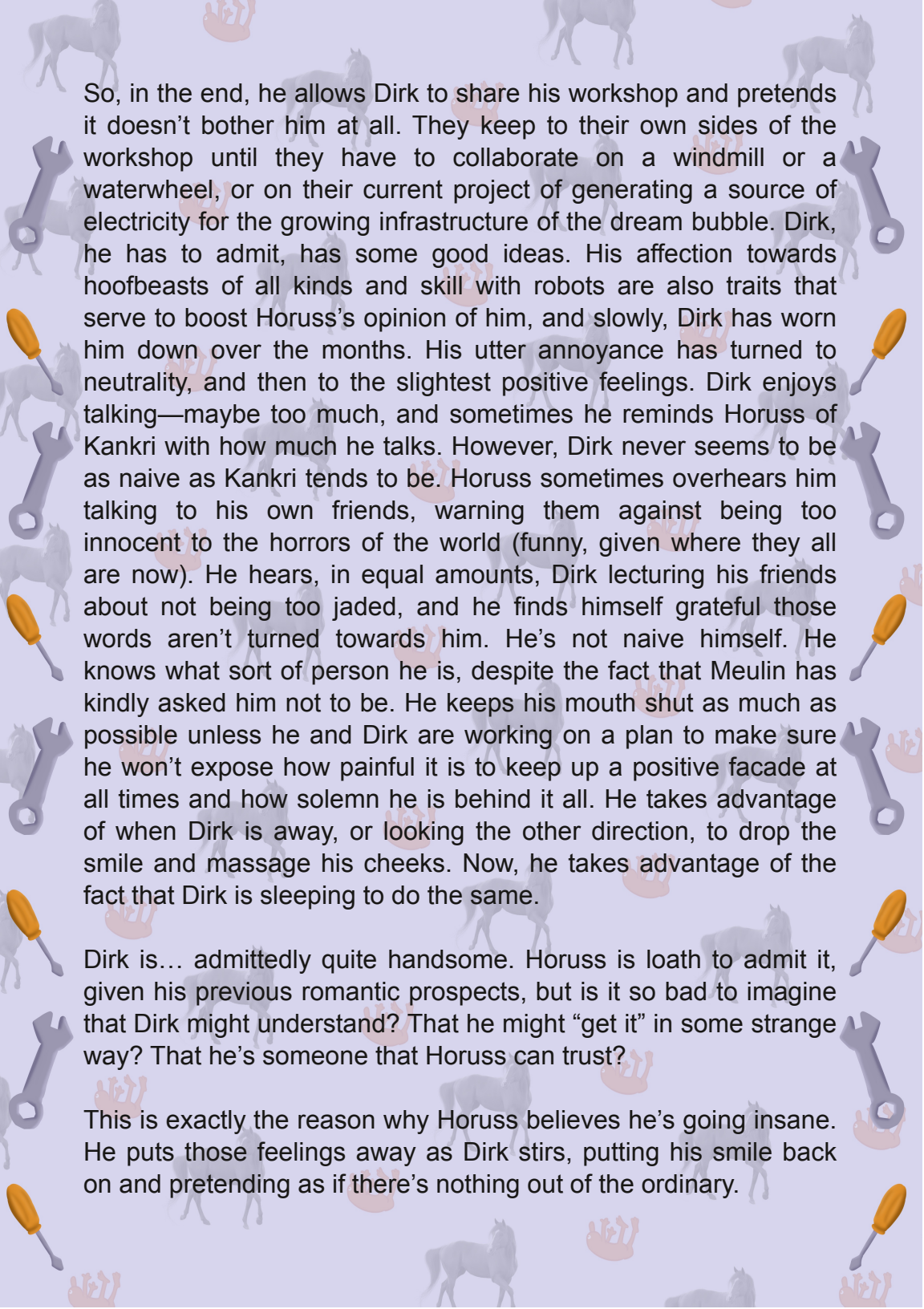
Enough Horsing Around

By: Casper

Horuss first believes that he's lost his mind when he starts to feel the fluttering feelings of flush in his chest seeing Dirk hunched over a table. They're in the workshop they regrettably share—well, Dirk got there first, and evidently hours before Horuss, by the looks of it, because he's face down on a cluttered desk. He might be snoring, potentially is drooling, and is clutching a screwdriver like a deadly weapon. It could be. It might be. Dirk seems like the type to commit violence with anything that may be handy if he needed to.

Horuss has staunchly denied sharing a workshop with anyone in the past. He relishes the opportunity to drop the smile he always wears should he become too frustrated with his work, and the thought of having someone new in his space—and a human at that, because despite his personal growth after meeting Rufioh, he is still very aware of his place in the homospectrum and the fact that Dirk is very much alien—watching him potentially fail again and again as he tries to improve... is one that only brings negative emotions. Of course, this meant that having Dirk enter his space was less than ideal. He'd hoped against all hope that it would be a temporary arrangement, or maybe the projects he and Dirk shared would peter out and he would leave Horuss to his own devices again, or the universe would intervene and make it so that they never had to be in the same room at the same time.

But in the end, they are in the dream bubbles. He wonders if dead people even get opportunities for progress. In his mind, it would make sense they didn't—if he really thinks about it, when has a ghost ever gotten an opportunity for character growth? No story he's ever heard has ever ended with undead personal growth. Maybe he's destined to be as unremarkable as he's always been.

The background of the page is a light purple color. It features a repeating pattern of stylized grey horses, orange handprints, and various tools including wrenches and screwdrivers in grey and orange. The text is centered in a black, sans-serif font.

So, in the end, he allows Dirk to share his workshop and pretends it doesn't bother him at all. They keep to their own sides of the workshop until they have to collaborate on a windmill or a waterwheel, or on their current project of generating a source of electricity for the growing infrastructure of the dream bubble. Dirk, he has to admit, has some good ideas. His affection towards hoofbeasts of all kinds and skill with robots are also traits that serve to boost Horuss's opinion of him, and slowly, Dirk has worn him down over the months. His utter annoyance has turned to neutrality, and then to the slightest positive feelings. Dirk enjoys talking—maybe too much, and sometimes he reminds Horuss of Kankri with how much he talks. However, Dirk never seems to be as naive as Kankri tends to be. Horuss sometimes overhears him talking to his own friends, warning them against being too innocent to the horrors of the world (funny, given where they all are now). He hears, in equal amounts, Dirk lecturing his friends about not being too jaded, and he finds himself grateful those words aren't turned towards him. He's not naive himself. He knows what sort of person he is, despite the fact that Meulin has kindly asked him not to be. He keeps his mouth shut as much as possible unless he and Dirk are working on a plan to make sure he won't expose how painful it is to keep up a positive facade at all times and how solemn he is behind it all. He takes advantage of when Dirk is away, or looking the other direction, to drop the smile and massage his cheeks. Now, he takes advantage of the fact that Dirk is sleeping to do the same.

Dirk is... admittedly quite handsome. Horuss is loath to admit it, given his previous romantic prospects, but is it so bad to imagine that Dirk might understand? That he might "get it" in some strange way? That he's someone that Horuss can trust?

This is exactly the reason why Horuss believes he's going insane. He puts those feelings away as Dirk stirs, putting his smile back on and pretending as if there's nothing out of the ordinary.

His attempts at pushing down his feelings, unsurprisingly, don't go well.

Horuss is entirely displeased by this fact. There is no reason for him to feel so flushed for this human, even if Dirk does bring him extra parts for his own tinkering, or if he listens carefully when Horuss explains how he's actually a hoofbeast, or even when Dirk takes it upon himself to build a miniature metal hoofbeast. He watches Horuss evaluate it, turning it from side to side until he finds a button on its neck. Dirk gestures for Horuss to put the hoofbeast down before he presses it, and it prances about the table with a tinny jingle playing as it tosses its head back and forth. Horuss can't help the way his face lights up as he watches it move, genuine excitement overwhelming him for a second. It aches in a different way than his frozen smile does. He glances up quickly, worried as to what Dirk may think (which is ridiculous, when he thinks about it).

Dirk's wearing a matching smile to his—the first time Horuss has seen him smile like that, actually. He feels the unavoidable feeling of flush in his chest again and suppresses the urge to grumble. No. He can't be that easily wooed, can he?

As he sets to work on making Dirk a new set of stands for his katana collection, he thinks that maybe he can. Not that he's ever going to admit it to anyone else, of course. The multiple broken prototypes and nights he nearly devolves into using inexcusable language seem worth it when Dirk admires the craftsmanship of the gift when it's finally delivered.

The third time the feelings rear their ugly head, Horuss decides he's done with all this horseplay.

"Dirk," he says softly. The workshop seems so vast at this time of night, the rest of the dream bubble quiet except for the sounds of

the two of them. Dirk blinks at him blearily. Horuss is reminded that it's a ridiculous hour of the night and they've both been up for too long, and briefly considers backing out of this whole plan entirely. But there's a part of him that wants this over and done with, and so he presses on as Dirk looks at him expectantly. "Humans have a concept of flushed romance, yes?"

"Dating, sure," Dirk says. Horuss nods slowly, turning the word over in his mind. "It's not like we're... required to fill the quadrant like you are."

"We're not required to do anything anymore," Horuss says before he can stop himself. He nearly cringes at how pessimistic he sounds, is about to apologize when Dirk nods thoughtfully.

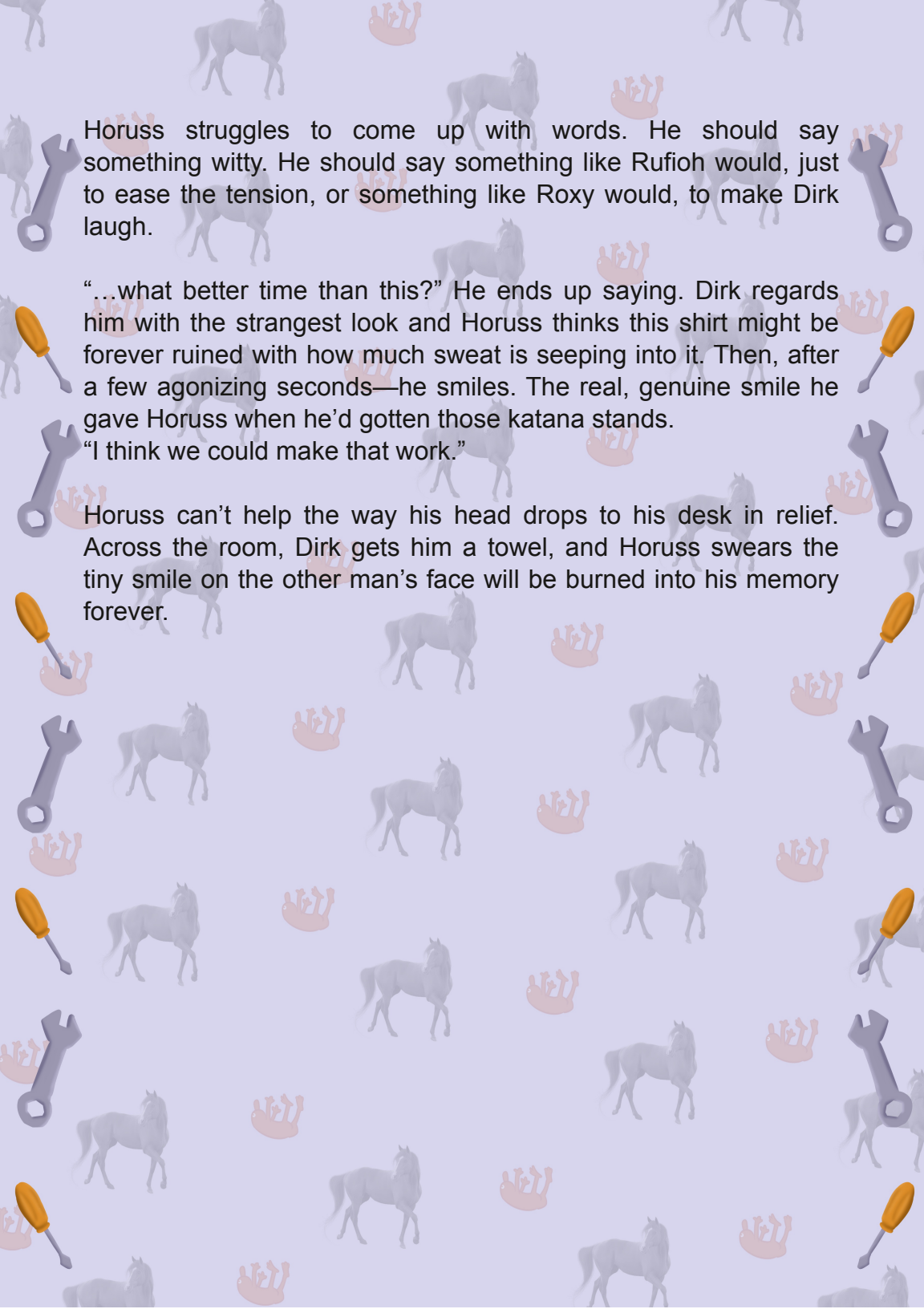
"Freedom to do what we want. What a terrifying idea." He puts his head back down on his desk, biting his lip. Horuss wishes for nothing more than to see his eyes behind his glasses. "Anyways, what were you getting at?"

"If it's not an invasive question—" Dirk raises a brow. "—is that quadrant filled for you?"

"...not anymore." He says. This is a sore subject. Maybe Horuss should turn back.

"Would you like it to be?" He says instead. Dirk pauses and looks at him, and despite not seeing his eyes Horuss can imagine him blinking like the strange creatures Dirk calls "owls." He can feel himself starting to sweat. "If it's not too forward, of course!"

"Are you asking me out at three in the morning?" Dirk tilts his head and glances at a clock. "...three forty-five in the morning, while I'm covered in engine grease?"

The background of the entire page is a light purple color with a repeating pattern of four types of icons: grey horses, orange crowns, blue keys, and yellow screwdrivers. These icons are scattered across the page, some overlapping the text.

Horuss struggles to come up with words. He should say something witty. He should say something like Rufioh would, just to ease the tension, or something like Roxy would, to make Dirk laugh.

“...what better time than this?” He ends up saying. Dirk regards him with the strangest look and Horuss thinks this shirt might be forever ruined with how much sweat is seeping into it. Then, after a few agonizing seconds—he smiles. The real, genuine smile he gave Horuss when he’d gotten those katana stands.

“I think we could make that work.”

Horuss can’t help the way his head drops to his desk in relief. Across the room, Dirk gets him a towel, and Horuss swears the tiny smile on the other man’s face will be burned into his memory forever.

Haha... yeah...

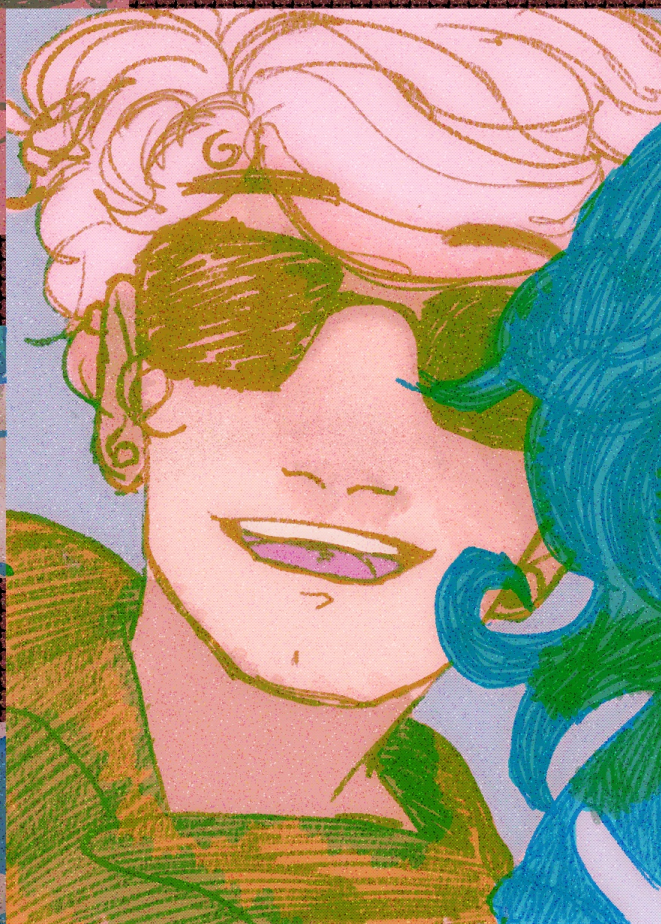
See?!

Look at how handsome you are!

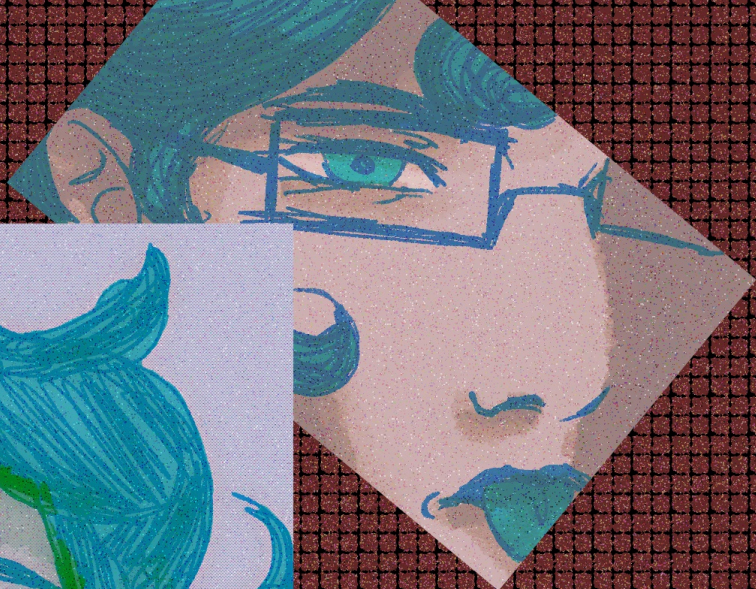








@modulitminuet



Redrom

By ifer

Redrom may be the quadrant most closely associated with the human style of love and romance, but this similarity is largely superficial.

Yes, the heart (or bloodpusher, as the case may be) is the organ symbolically aligned with Matespritship. Yes, the colour red is in play. And yes it is a bit more than that: matespritship is a romance that centers closeness and sexual attraction, but without the need to clash and test and bite that blackrom brings to the table.

But when you look even a little closer than that, the assumption that they could be deemed remotely synonymous falls apart entirely.

It would be easy to say that when Karkat says "pity" it is merely a translation issue and that he is actually referring to emotions analogous to the ones that humans call love, in the same way that a "load gaper" can be assumed to be essentially the same as a toilet, but this would be completely wrong. Most kinds of human love involve a kind of admiration and appreciation that is fundamentally antithetical to the Troll experience of concupiscent pity. In fact, if one is consumed with thoughts of how their partner is great and awesome and baggable, one is simply not experiencing pity at all.

While flushing does involve some amount of identifying traits in one's flushcrush that stand out positively from the norm, these serve mainly to contrast the true core of the quadrant: all of the ways that your partner is dangerously and tragically subpar. Absolute cullbait. The worst.

This may be confusing to human readers.



Why would one want to be with someone who they think sucks? They might ask. What social or evolutionary drive could possibly make one look at two trolls and immediately favour the one who is an embarrassing example of their kind over one that's an average dude; or even better wait for an option that's actually kinda rad? This human would be nodding to themselves like they've said something insightful and revolutionary and totally broken apart the foundations of this alien society like a romantic guru coming down the mountain to bless the masses with their wisdom.

This human would be a fool.

A fool taking their surface-level understanding of their own singular romantic milieu and slapping it over the quadrant with the same symbol.

Their foolishness is, however, understandable. When a human thinks about their loved ones, people they cherish and choose to have in their life, what will come to mind will be largely positive qualities, and a common theme brought up amongst them will be obvious if you ever talk to one about their paramour: admiration, or at least the intent to instill it in the listener. Humans want their lover to be their PARTNER, and in looking to complete the group project called life they specifically want a strong ally who will make it easier for them to complete daily tasks, create a comfortable life, wrangle a decent place in the social and physical ecosystem, and perhaps most importantly for this discussion, successfully reproduce and raise the next generation with the best chance of surviving and continuing that chain of ancestry into the future.

And they will brag incessantly about their conquests and successes in this endeavor until the milkbeasts return to the barn for their dinner.

Trolls don't do any of that, and especially not with their matesprit. Yes, the ultimate goal is to reproduce, but that's much less pressing when you don't have to spend upwards of a dozen years tending to needy spawn's every need and amping them up to make their way in the world. Since the reproductive duties end once the drones exit the house with geneslime in hand, trolls don't have to look for a powerful teamup with which to create a safe and nurturing environment. Nor do they need to be in constant contact with others of their kind, romantic or not, to be a success.

And as for finding the biggest, baddest hunk around to swap gametes with so that your progeny are all Übermensch ? We already have a mechanism for that. Is called kismessitude. Look it up. We made a zine about it. I'll wait.

...

Back? Good.

So obviously doing the same thing twice is a waste of time so there has be something else going on with matespritship than being impressed into swooning and going to bone town, and in fact it is almost the exact opposite of that. To stray into gaming metaphors for a bit, because we're all geeks here and we all know it, in a kismesis you're looking for a gal who's a high roller, getting all her stats in the 14-18 range (a 10, of course, being the statistical average). Preferably the same stat total as you because she'll be looking for that in you as well. For your matesprit though? You're looking for the heap of trash who rolled a nat 20 or two amongst a sea of sub-8's.

You see, blackrom improves the genepool by steadily raising the average. But redrom looks for the once in a million genetic lottery that would otherwise be wasted on some loser cullbait, and

tosses it back in the pool in the hopes that it pops back up in a generation or two as something other than a glass canon.

And while a palemate might be looking at the same exact traits and going "I can fix this," for a matesprit that ship has sailed. Their moirail can spend all the time and effort trying to whip that troll into shape, but that is not your circus and you are here to eat popcorn and behold the glory of the monkeys setting fire to the surrounding area. All those broken cracks and dirty dishes and red flags are exactly what you find attractive in the first place.

No need to worry too much about whether the nat20 is even genetic either, your job is to pump out a bunch of grubs and let the trials; the culling, and Alternia's various horrors take care of r-selecting the wheat from the chaff.

With these two complementary methods of genetic selection, the mother grub's high-volume output, and the harsh survival requirements (along with the socially-minded stability assist that the conciliatory quadrants bring to the table), Trolls are able to get the most out of their extremely high mutation rate.

[Side Note: Any given grub has 4 gene donors (one red couple and one black couple, two "girls" and two "boy" trolls), the Mother Grub having sourced said donors from an incestuous slurry that combined material from all across the empire. The result is that any given troll is likely to have a whole host of unique traits both beneficial and costly. The subsequent rapid attrition means that adaptation is quick, and a wide gene pool means avoiding population bottlenecks and the pitfalls of evolving to fit too small or too specific a niche. Trolls have amongst them plenty enough variation to handily survive the loss of large swaths of their population, globally disastrous changes to their environment, and the presence of so many overwhelmingly powerful troll-eating predators in their environment.

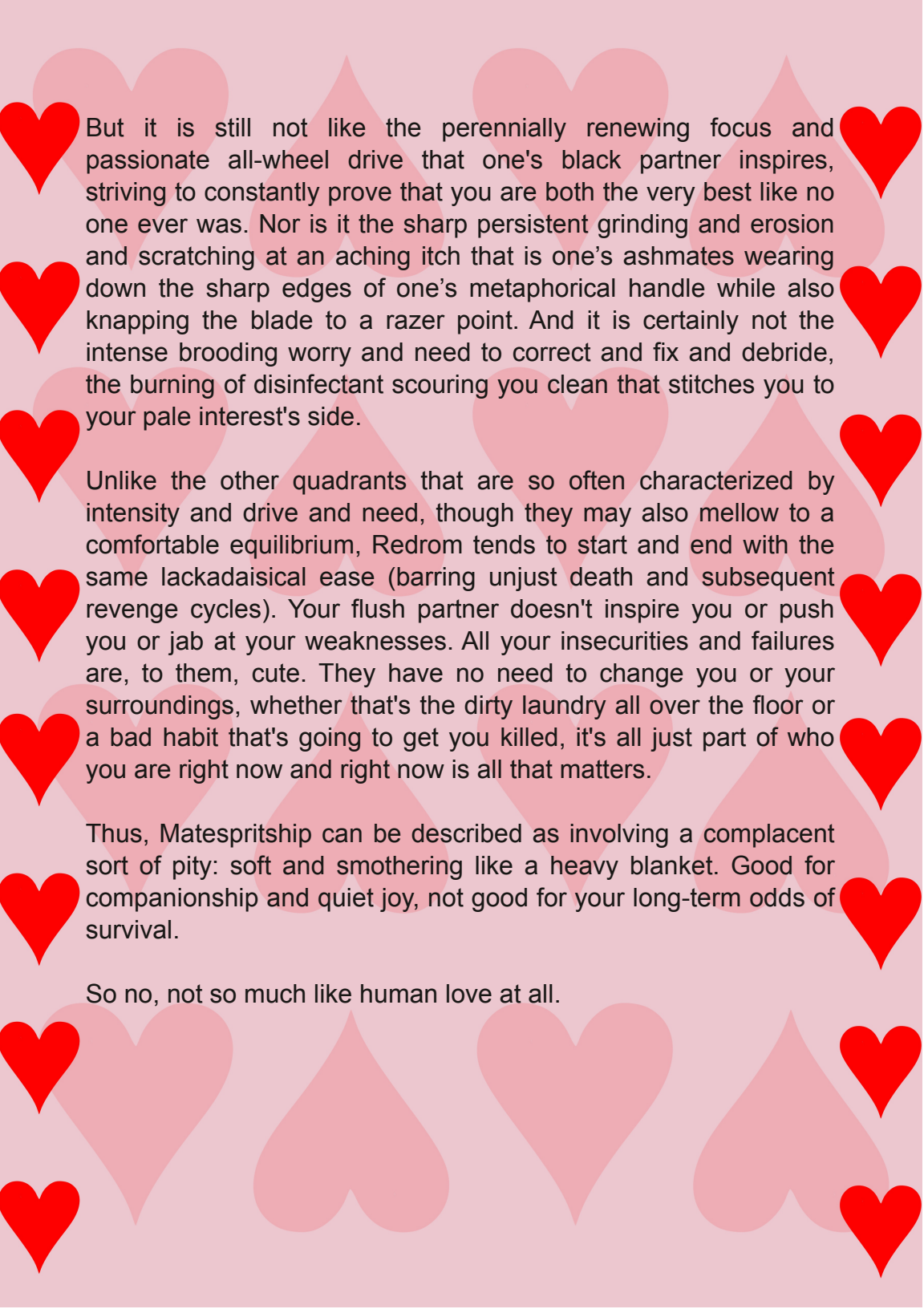
Overall the troll species can bounce back from a ridiculously small breeding group, without the decreased biological fitness of an inbred population, so long as they have access to a mother grub.]

As one might imagine, ancestrally redrom was a quadrant prone to a lot of one-sided one-off dalliances, since the likelihood of someone spotting a random gifted idiot to bed is a lot higher than two of them finding eachother; and even that pales in comparison to the odds of any given troll finding two good matches who are viewing them at angles sufficient to render them as the top of the class and the lowest gold star winner simultaneously, which used to be fine cause so long as you get your genes in the slurry you are, evolutionarily speaking, a success. You could have trolls who were awesome and trolls that sucked and it was fine.

But a certain someone ruined that for everyone by instating those mandatory-else-death buckets, so unfortunately if you're not both pitybait and ragebait you are not tall enough to ride the Alternian Express; please exit the vehicle and all hail the Condesce as the Drones forcibly eject you from the Thief of Life's domain.

[Relatedly, you're not all that likely to find your next flushcrush on the cover of a magazine. The genetic lottery is not served by flooding the box with ballets from the same contestant, and if someone else is willing to take the L to roll that hay back into genetic rotation then you'd be better off continuing the search for the needle that's being missed. In other words, a troll being commonly known as a pity magnet is a turn-off.]

This also means that matesprit is now expected to both be reciprocal and long-term by ideal if not by default. So one does have some investment in one's get-out-of-cull ticket sticking around both locally, romantically, and living-ly.



But it is still not like the perennially renewing focus and passionate all-wheel drive that one's black partner inspires, striving to constantly prove that you are both the very best like no one ever was. Nor is it the sharp persistent grinding and erosion and scratching at an aching itch that is one's ashmates wearing down the sharp edges of one's metaphorical handle while also knapping the blade to a razer point. And it is certainly not the intense brooding worry and need to correct and fix and debride, the burning of disinfectant scouring you clean that stitches you to your pale interest's side.

Unlike the other quadrants that are so often characterized by intensity and drive and need, though they may also mellow to a comfortable equilibrium, Redrom tends to start and end with the same lackadaisical ease (barring unjust death and subsequent revenge cycles). Your flush partner doesn't inspire you or push you or jab at your weaknesses. All your insecurities and failures are, to them, cute. They have no need to change you or your surroundings, whether that's the dirty laundry all over the floor or a bad habit that's going to get you killed, it's all just part of who you are right now and right now is all that matters.

Thus, Matespritship can be described as involving a complacent sort of pity: soft and smothering like a heavy blanket. Good for companionship and quiet joy, not good for your long-term odds of survival.

So no, not so much like human love at all.





ART BY
DUAL
ITYS
DOWN
FALL
5-3-25





The Beach

Liv

For some time now you and the June human have been “going steady” as matesprits or “girlfriends” as she says it. You’ve questioned her on the clarity of the term, after all, the use of the word friend would imply a relationship beneath that of romance; what significant difference does applying a gender onto the front of a word make when describing a relationship? What is the difference between “girl friends” and “girlfriends”, to which she always laughs it off and says not to worry about it. But you do. You worry very much about it. A lack of clarity in relationships has led to a great number of ordeals for you and her linguistic meddling, no matter how petty they seem to her, could spell the doom of another promising quadrant for the both of you; a fate most foul. June in general seems to be very relaxed about the nature of your shared relationship, whereas you can only focus on the flaws. You mean she’s perfect, it is just sometimes, she’s not.

But she’s supposed to be perfect, or rather you’re supposed to THINK she is. When Feferi and Sollux were matesprits they were perfect, you hate to admit it but they were; it seemed like they could be the worst fucking person in the universe and the other one would still stare hearts at them, like Sollux could rip off his skin and declare himself Lord English and Fef would just nod along and be his noble bitch! But June, at first she was like a goddess sent to you in shorts and graphic-T’s to make you the protagonist of some power fantasy story even Nepeta would stare blankly at you for talking about, but now it’s like your red-tinted glasses have got a chip in them, like, bugwinged she has no taste in reading material and her skin care routine is literally just a wet face cloth to the face twice a day and AND she’s unironically awful at the games she sinks the most time into. You’re starting to worry that you’re losing your grip on another quadrant but you’re also unwilling to cut it off prematurely. Maybe she’s the only one in the

universe right now that thinks YOU'RE perfect and you'd much rather have the other party be on the one-sided feelings side than you.

Regardless, the two of you have planned a date most casual today, it being both of your day devoid of any other obligations, and you intend to make the most of it and keep her more than satisfied with you as her "girlfriend". Perhaps, if the stars align you will follow in the steps of your jade blooded compatriot and "marry" the human. June had chosen a secluded beach to have a lawnmeal on which delights you so.

At the moment you stand in her meal block, perusing the sandwiches and snacks she's packed as she hops around the hall, putting on a new article of clothing each time she exits a room. It's almost comical how she'll insist on the food being ready before you come but she's in nothing more than panties and an apron when she opens the door; stirs up thoughts best left for the respiteblock.

"woah," she says as she nearly hop-runs into you while she puts on her sock, you let her move past you to the wall where she finally stops moving and stabilizes herself with half her body, gliding the sock on more successfully now.

She comes back to you to greet you with a kiss which you return. You part and nod to the food and start packing it into your satchel. Her eyes widen and she runs to the bathroom; returning with towels and stuffs them into her backpack. You lift her chin up and kiss her once more before grabbing her helmet and shoving it onto her head. You can almost feel her wanting to do the same to you but unfortunately for her trickster ways your horns would get in the way and the prank would land at least one of you in the medical centre. You buckle your helmet on and the two of you

leave the apartment. Outside your two wheeled device or “bike” as she puts it leans on hers. You move yours and hop onto it and she does the same.

“check your bike horn!” she says with a devilish grin

“i don’t havve on-” you say with a hint of confusion before she pinches your nose while making a honking noise.

You blink at her before the joke kicks in and you chuckle, it’s a joke you’d shoot daggers at Gamzee for making but maybe the matespritship is doing it’s thing and making you think June is a comedic genius.

The two of you start off; at first you take the lead, being more limber from the ride to her apartment, but soon she passes you, leading the way. It takes about an hour ride and 30 minutes of walking through private property without a bikeable path to finally emerge from the trees to see the beach. The beach is mostly pebbles instead of pure sand but the sea and complete lack of trolloid life makes it worth it. You take off your helmet and June follows after she lets her bike rest on the short cliff of solid ground before the beach line starts.

You almost immediately undress to the swimming suit you had on underneath but June is more hesitant. The wind hits her and she recoils more into her jacket. Sensing she might not be meeting you in the waves quite yet you move back up the beach and grab a towel from her backpack. When you do so, the glint of something catches your eye, but you being a good matesprit, quickly look away and lay out the towel for your beloved’s slightly improved comfort.

“thanks,” she says as she pulls your satchel closer to her.

She pulls out an ova salad sandwich in a small tuberware and starts to chew on the food. You look back at the sea, back at her and lay down beside her.

"oh I should get you a towel too," she says as she starts to get up before you tug her arm back down with admittedly more force than you meant.

"i wwill be fine." you say and roll onto your stomach.

"you sure?" she says. She almost sounds like Fef for a second, you grimace without thinking and then flash a smile to hide it. From Aranea talking your fins off while jewellery shopping you've learned the two are technically related via some bullshit the Condesce pulled but sometimes it feels more like the two could be dancestors, if dancestors could be entirely different races. You supposed that might be what initially had drawn her to you but the weird inflection to her voice that makes you somewhat unsure of her sincerity when she asks you a question does slightly annoy you.

Fuck you're supposed to be focusing on the good stuff! She's perfect and anything that says otherwise is wrong!

You turn your head back to her; she's pulled another slice of her sandwich out of her tuberware. You reach out to her hand and subconsciously start rubbing your thumb across the back of her hand. She turns her head to you and her expression is not quite as warm as before. She adjusts her glasses with the back of the hand holding her sandwich and then takes another bite.

The two of you exist in silence as she slowly chews on what's in her mouth before she breaks the silence.

"am i a good matesprit?"

The question catches you off guard. June is not usually the person concerned with the troll aspect of your relationship, why now? Is she breaking up with you? What did you do wrong now? Is this the stake in the rainbow drinker's blood pusher that crawled out of its corpse box for any chance of you ever not being single until the end of time? Should you start writing your will now in case this break up makes you die tragically young and beautiful from a broken blood pusher? Could you swing this around to a kismesistude? No you probably couldn't pull that off. Maybe you should start adopting purrbeast, that's what single people do right? RIGHT?

"eridan."

"am i a good matesprit?"

"no-no you are perfect."

"are you just saying that or are you being real with me?" She says; eyes staring into your soul.

"y-yes,"

"yes you're joshing me or yes you're being honest?"

"yes-no- i don't knoww."

She moves her hand away from mine.

"listen i don't understand your troll romance stuff but sometimes it feels like you're not being honest with either of us about it."

"wwhy do you say that?" you say squirming into a lounging position and moving your free hand to cup her face.

She grabs it mid air, “whenever i catch a hint of dissatisfaction with me from you, it feels like you bend over backwards trying to cover it up instead of actually addressing it. i can’t tell if i’m crazy, if you’re being weird or if this is just standard practice for matesprits. am i being a bad matesprit?”

You pause for a second, “i mean i guess you are... matesprits are supposed to think their partner is perfect and i guess... that since we are having this conversation, you don’t think we are.”

“so you’ve been hiding the fact that i’m not a perfect being from yourself because matesprits are supposed to treat each other like- like a god?”

“i mean you are a god.”

“very funny eridan. answers now.”

“i guess... i- yes that is what i have been doing.”

“then i don’t want to be your matesprit.”

“WWHAT?!”

“i don’t want to be in a relationship where we need to keep lying to ourselves into believing that everything is sunshine and rainbows or whatever the equivalent phrase in alternian. why can’t we just be okay with each other having flaws?”

“because matesprits are an important part of a healthy troll’s life.”

“why though? i get that the quadrants were important back when you were on alternia but the old regime is over, dead, burst to a crisp. you don’t have to worry about creepy drones coming after

you because you aren't being a perfect troll with two amazing lovers-hater things. heaven sakes man, we don't even do whatever you're supposed to do with buckets!" She retorts as her voice starts cracking.

You go to drop your hand and June lets it fall to your side. "i. i don't knoww. i guess i just wwant to say i finally havve a matesprit for once. i alwways wwanted to say i had one."

"so this is an ego thing?"

You look away from her, toward the sea, "i guess... i feel like it's something i need to havve."

"eridan be frank with me. how long do you think you were going to be able to keep this up?"

"i don't knoww, at least until the spark comes back and you start seeming perfect again?"

"so you were fine with lying to yourself, possibly until the end of days because you're afraid of not being perfect?"

"i guess."

"see i can't do that. i can't deal with lying to myself that long. i can't be your matesprit. at least not with your definition of love."

"so ww'e're ovver?"

"i mean not necessarily. we can still be girlfriends, be honest."

"girlfriends as in the human wword to refer to wwomen in lovve or girl friends as in twwo or more female friends?"

“option uno, but maybe both if it feels right.” June says, the smile returning to her face.

“and if the spark comes back-”

“maybe we can be matesprits again. maybe we can make our own definition someday.”

You smile, “ i wwould like that.”

“then it’s settled. i’m a terrible matesprit; but i do make a fine girlfriend.”

“yes, yes you do.” You start to blush.

“come on then, let’s go enjoy some salt water,” June says as she stands up and starts to undress, “the tide won’t be in forever.”

Before long the two of you are splashing around and trying to swim to varying levels of competency. You feel a little more free.



2025
3/21
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stickie
max!!

zebruh





Whispers in the Dust

By: [SB]

"How much longer will we be digging?" Sollux sighed, an old [troll] final fantasy shirt coated in dirt as he plops down on the edge of the hole they'd dug. He'd never admit it, but as much as he hated being outside, the dirt, physical exercise in general,- he... was happy. After all, the way her face lit up as she looked up at him from the hole, dirt caked from her boots to her hair, was like the twin full moons above his head. Bright and beautiful.

"As long as it takes!" Aradia laughs, "I'm confident there's a skeleton here!"

Four hours passed, the manual labor was exhausting, even with his psionics, but it felt like moments just because he could see her at his side. "Okay, but if thi2 take2 any longer we're going back in for 2andwiche2." He huffs, smiling. "My wimpy body i2n't de2igned to be thi2 phy2ically active with only a cup ramen in me."

"You should really eat more Sollux." He can hear the pout in her voice, "digging is hard work!"

He'd consider it. It was a lot of effort but... If it made her happy it might be worth it. "More like torture. Tell me again, what'2 got you 2o intere2ted in the2e bone2?"

"Well, based on my calculations there should be one or more bodies here! Since there was what looked like a settlement up that way," she points west, leaning on her shovel now, "If it's the age I think it is then their burial pit should be right around here."

"Right- yeah. And why are we looking for a burial pit?" He already knew why, he just liked listening to her talk.

"Burial practices can tell us so much about a society from how they separate the burials, what they are buried with, and who is buried." Aradia crouches down to brush something off, frowning when it turns out to be another rock. "Bones can tell you their life story if you know what to look for. Each fracture, break, indentation tells a story." She signals him and he yanks the rock out with his psionics, yeeting it somewhere behind him, he didn't look where. Shovel digging into the ground she's quick to dig deeper.

"Take that skeleton I showed you last week. Female based on the hip and leg bones. She had a fracture in her arm likely from being struck with a large object, likely in a fight, the one that killed her based on how the bone never healed; and the cracking from an impact in her skull. From her bones we can tell she was a hunter, and that she likely got in physical fights with the beasts she hunted. The settlement was near a contaminated pool of water as well, the water she spent her whole life drinking and left it's mark on her bones, she was sick and didn't even know it. That's probably why that village died out, they had no idea what was wrong with their water, or how to fix it,"

She didn't go into as much detail as last time, likely because the bones weren't in front of them for her to point at. This sort of talk might have bored him normally. He was more into tech after all, but she always managed to keep his attention. The way she could learn their whole life story based on just their bones... He wondered what his bones might tell her, if she ever got to see them. Would she be able to tell how much he loves her? Would his pallid remains have his every thought etched into them? Would she run her hands over them with the same care that she uses on these artifacts? Would he become a precious relic that she dusts every day?

Would his bones tell the story of betrayal? His crimes?

Eyes dropping to his hands on the shovel, they are covered in blood. His breath catches in his air chute.

Looking up all he can see are the ruins of what used to be a hive, smoke rising into the sky. He remembers dropping to his knees, eyes blurry with tears as his mind sorts out what in the hell is going on. He could hear her voice.

Mustard blood is streaked on his dirty hands, one of his nails was gone. He was digging. How long had he been digging? Hours? He freezes, hand hovering before closing around a scrap of fabric. It was one of her favorite shirts... Full of holes and caked in burgundy blood.

He crumpled to his bleeding knees, and broke down again.

He'd vaporized her.

He could still hear her.

Everything was gone, her smile, her home, ever wriggling day gift, every bone.

Her voice still echoed her last words.

Everything he loved.

"Sollux?"

Sollux awakens with a gasp, neck killing him as he sits up in his chair. His chest feels tight and his face is soaked. He drags the collar of his shirt across his disgusting face before giving his neck a crack. Gog he had to stop sleeping in his chair, one of these nights his spine would just snap, letting his head roll across the floor. It'd be fitting though, wouldn't it? He grimaced at his days old, stained, and now wet and snotty shirt. Time to change.

Pushing himself up he gasps, dropping back into the chair. Fuck his entire body hurt. If Karkat saw him he'd probably say something like, "YOU FUCKING DIPSHIT IF YOU WOULD JUST MOVE AROUND INSTEAD OF SITTING ON YOUR ASS YOU WOULD BE FINE. BUT NOOOO YOU HAVE TO HAVE A FUCKING PITY PARTY FOR YOURSELF AND LET YOURSELF SHRIVEL AWAY INSTEAD OF-"

Sollux presses a tense hand to his temple, Fuck that was enough of that, even imagining what he'd say easy annoying. Like that asshole was one to talk. 'Welcome to McPity Parties, I'm the manager, Karkat. What would you like to order today.'

Giving his body a careful stretch to alleviate some of the tension, he lets his psionics fire up, lifting himself up. He wouldn't have to worry about his body if he just floated to the closet. Drifting across his pitch black room he strips off the old shirt, tossing it on the ground, which is where most of his clothes lived as of late, he drags open the dresser. He didn't have many clean clothes left, at this rate he'd have to start putting the floor stuff back on.

Sollux pulls out the first black shirt his hand touches without thinking and freezes, breath catching. It has a skeletal hand on it pointing to the right and reading 'I'm with Creepy.' He'd gotten it as a joke set with Aradia. He... had forgotten about it. He squeezes his eyes shut, if he could just compose himself-

“Sollux?”

He whips around, moist bi-colored eyes scanning the dark room, illuminated only by his computer and his own psionics. Nothing. Of course it was nothing. They were mocking him. He’s used to tuning out the voices of the soon and already deceased, but there’s no universe in which he could ever ignore her voice.

He breathes deep through his mouth, nose too stuffed to be of any use. He was running out of shirts. If he wears it inside-out he wouldn’t have to see the image on it. He shoves his hand through the neck hole, careful not to tear it with his somewhat overgrown claws before yanking the inside out.

Pulling the shirt over his head he turns, drifting back towards his desk, grimacing at the trash and crumbs coating every visible surface. As if reminded, his stomach grumbles painfully. Shit, when was the last time he ate? He hopes he has anything edible left in the fridge, since he actually thinks he might be feeling a bit sick with how hungry he is, now that he’s aware of it again.

Welp, time to check the meal block. Floating back he ignores the mess in the darkened rooms, heading straight for the sink to at least absorb some disgusting water. Better to take care of that first and foremost considering the only things he remembers drinking for the last... however long it’s been, has been energy drinks and pop. The cup he pulls out of the cupboard is... Covered in dust. Fantastic. He rinses it out, ignoring the heaping dishes before downing as much water as he can before he starts hacking.

Not only had he managed to get water in his air chute but it, as usual, tastes disgusting. Supporting himself with his arm on the counter he wipes his mouth with his arm. Yeah no more of that.

He didn't care if his stomach felt a little better, that was a horrible experience, 1/10. Do not recommend.

Abandoning the cup on the crowded counter he wipes his hands on his pants before reaching for the fridge. As expected, it was mostly empty except for some expired takeout, moldy cheese, and- He slams the fridge shut. He wasn't even going to think about it. The lump of what used to be a slice of cake. Cake that Aradia had given him for his wriggling day. 3 days before he'd killed her.

His ganderbulbs comb the room, he wasn't going to think about her. What could he distract himself with? Ugh, as much as he hated the thought, all he could think to do within immediate reach, (since he likely wouldn't make it back to his respite block without the memories catching up), was cleaning. He couldn't think about anything worse to do then clean right now, but he needed anything, a single moment without her haunting him.

Rotating in the air he starts picking up the clutter on the counter. He wouldn't wash any dishes, that was still too much, but maybe he could at least move the trash into an organized stack rather than a cluttered pile. Flicking some trash near the full garbage can, he considers if he is able to actually take out a bag or trash. What would that need... Getting the bag to close, leaving his hive, and descending about 30 stories.... Or he could throw it out the window and hope it hits the dumpster. He almost snorts to himself at that, a wry smile curling his lips. Yeah that could be-

His hand freezes over a lump of thin metal he'd uncovered. Tentatively he reaches out and grabs it. A bracelet. It was simple, plain metal, but he recognized it. Aradia must have left it when she'd come over that one time rattling on about croakbeasts. He remembered because she's been wearing more jewelry in general that day, a very punk look that was generally unusual for

her- then again she'd been messaging him a bunch about some bone themed punk group she'd gotten into. That phase only lasted about 3 moons but he remembers she still, when her hive was in one piece, had a poster up for them in there.

This bracelet stuck out to him though because it drew attention to the mole on the inside of her wrist- or at least he thought it did. He runs a thumb over it. He loved that mole. No reason, he loved the way when she grinned only one side of her face formed a dimple, and the way she laughed through her nose.

"Sollux?"

The bracelet clatters across the wooden floor, red and blue eyes once again searching the room. The shadows felt dark and judgmental. He couldn't stand his hive, no matter what he did, no matter how many hours he buried his face in his computer, he was surrounded by memories of her.

The time she burst into his room, dragged him out of his recuperacoon half naked without batting an eye and started yammering about a structural remnant and signs of a sort of religious practices somewhere in the hills near her hive while he just scrambled to get some clothes on. The spill on his loungeplank from where she laughed so hard at a film that she not only spewed soda out her nose, but spilled the entire bottle in the process. That dent in the wall from the time she got so excited about an positively received email from some troll significant in the world of bones and ruins that she spun him around, forgetting he was floating and threw him into his own wall.

Everywhere he turned he could see her. But he couldn't just leave to escape it either. The outside hat to many people, to much noise, judging looks, and so many voices of the soon to

be deceased. Even if their voices drowned out hers, he couldn't stand being around so much death. Sollux's hand balls into his shirt. He couldn't breathe. If he'd never said anything, kept his stupid mouth shut, Aradia would probably still be here.

It was his fault. All because he mentioned the honey to Vriska; Vriska of all fucking people. His throat hurt, his other hand clawing into his hair. It was his fault, and he couldn't fucking breathe. Maybe it was time to actually use his fucking recuperacoon. He couldn't even think, let alone calm down.

Half rolling through the air he manages to float back to his block. Fuck he's just losing the measly amount of water he drank all over again. What was even the point? What a waste. Unable to fully let go of his shirt he just uses it to rub his eyes before dropping himself in the cocoon of ooze. Fuck taking his clothes off, they could just be ruined he didn't care. He just didn't want to think anymore.



Art by ifew 2025

How have you
never seen
Ghostbusters??

ion kno lol

It's one of the
greastest movies ever
made, you know and
Dan and Tom Hanl
and then the
the Slimer! An
Hehe and the
dunno if u will
love your watching

Ur so cute when
u rant :)



AUG 25







Credits



Ifer



ihasafandom



artbyifer

Summer/Bees
summerstar135



M0rb1dspade



m0rb1dspade



m0rb1d.carrd.co/

Max

stickiemax



[SB]/Serp



brainwashfalls



serpentsBreakdown

Credits



Casper



ghostqueennotmean.carrd.co/



peril

tenderperil.carrd.co/



Allison/Gorgor

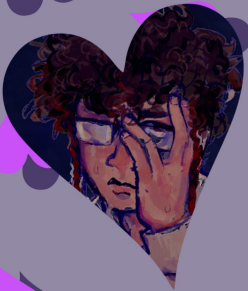


[@_callmegorgor](https://twitter.com/_callmegorgor)



Rue/Torrent

canifemmes



J. Leart



[@jekkleart](https://twitter.com/jekkleart)



Vanessa

[@fineline-feline](https://twitter.com/fineline-feline)



August/Auggy

drow3n



luckyelfart



Jax!



Jimposts



Jaxydraws

Pema

peillustrate



Ørvar



elvenobsidianarts



Meteor

rockgutz



Horror



h0rrorh3rmit



Credits



Miles



mythsoil



Dal/Wildcard

DalastorRadio



dalastor-radio

DalastorRadio



Quinn



catgirlweed



Andy/Bambi

<http://linktr.ee/andyartistics>



DandyBambiAndy



Andy Artistics



Harper/KK



dualitysdownfall



ghostedglitch



Mewdusa / Malerie

doctormpractice



mewdusa(spacehey)



Caleb
falseconductor 



Liv
 candycorncremator



Sollux
adamantineSunset  

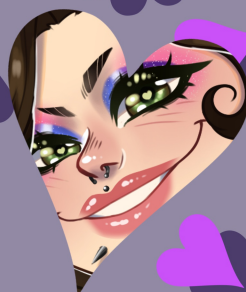


Cronus/Sheriff

 zebruh
 zebruhcodakk



Eddie
catgoesboom.carrd.co/ 
catgoesboom (on
most platforms)



Phoenix

 moonlit-minuet
  moonlitminuet



Downloadable Add-Ons



Mobile Background
By: August

Desktop Background
By: Liv



Matching
Wedding
Icons
By: Pema



Downloadable Add-Ons

Our Love
is Be-witch-ing,
Valentine!

to:
from:



Printable
Valentines

By: August

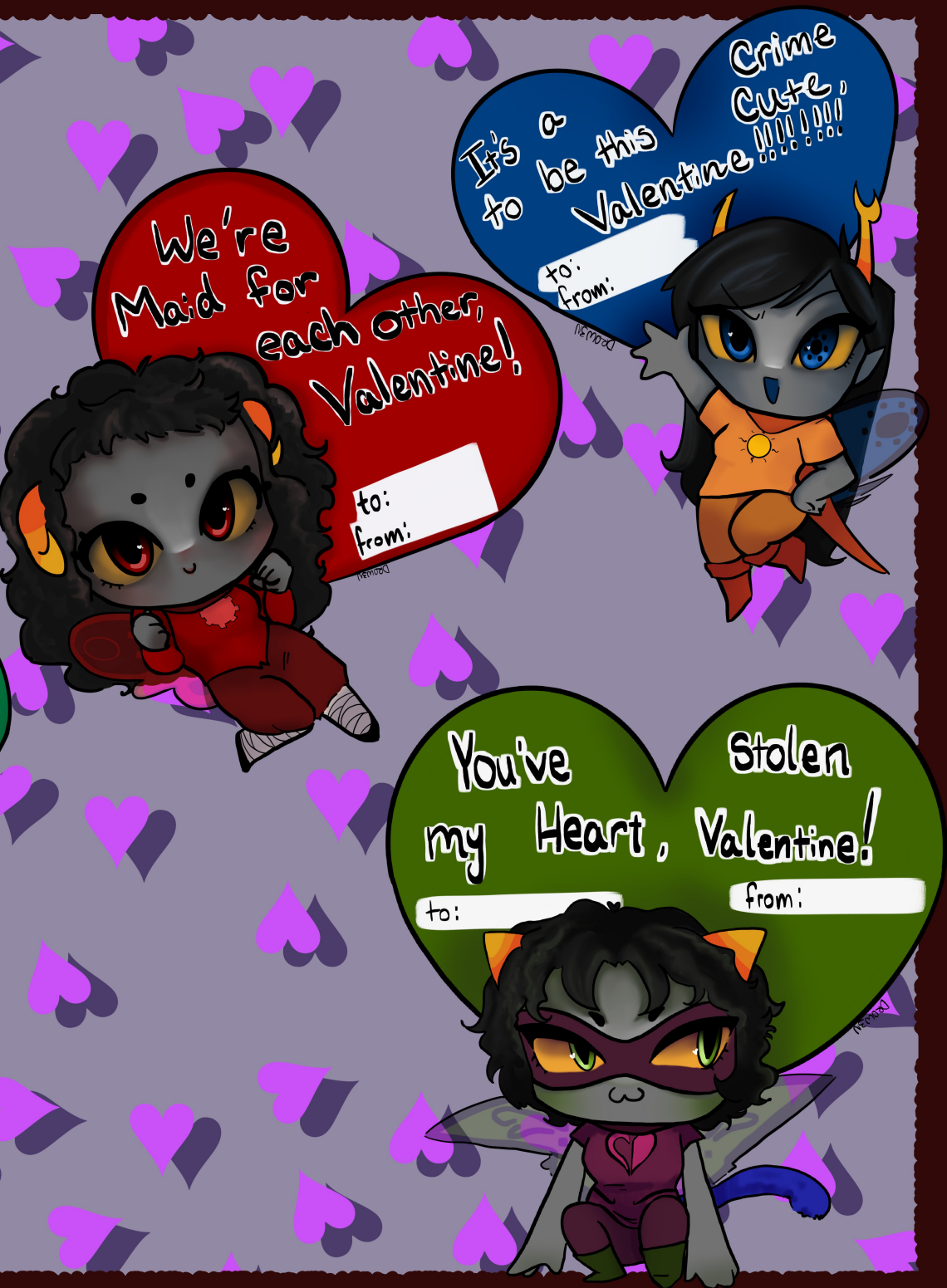
You're just
my type,
Valentine!

to:
from:

to:
from:

I'd like
to court you
Supremely,
Valentine!





We're Maid for each other, Valentine!

to:
from:

It's a to be this Valentine

to:
from:

Crime Cute!!!!!!

You've Stolen my Heart, Valentine!

to:

from:

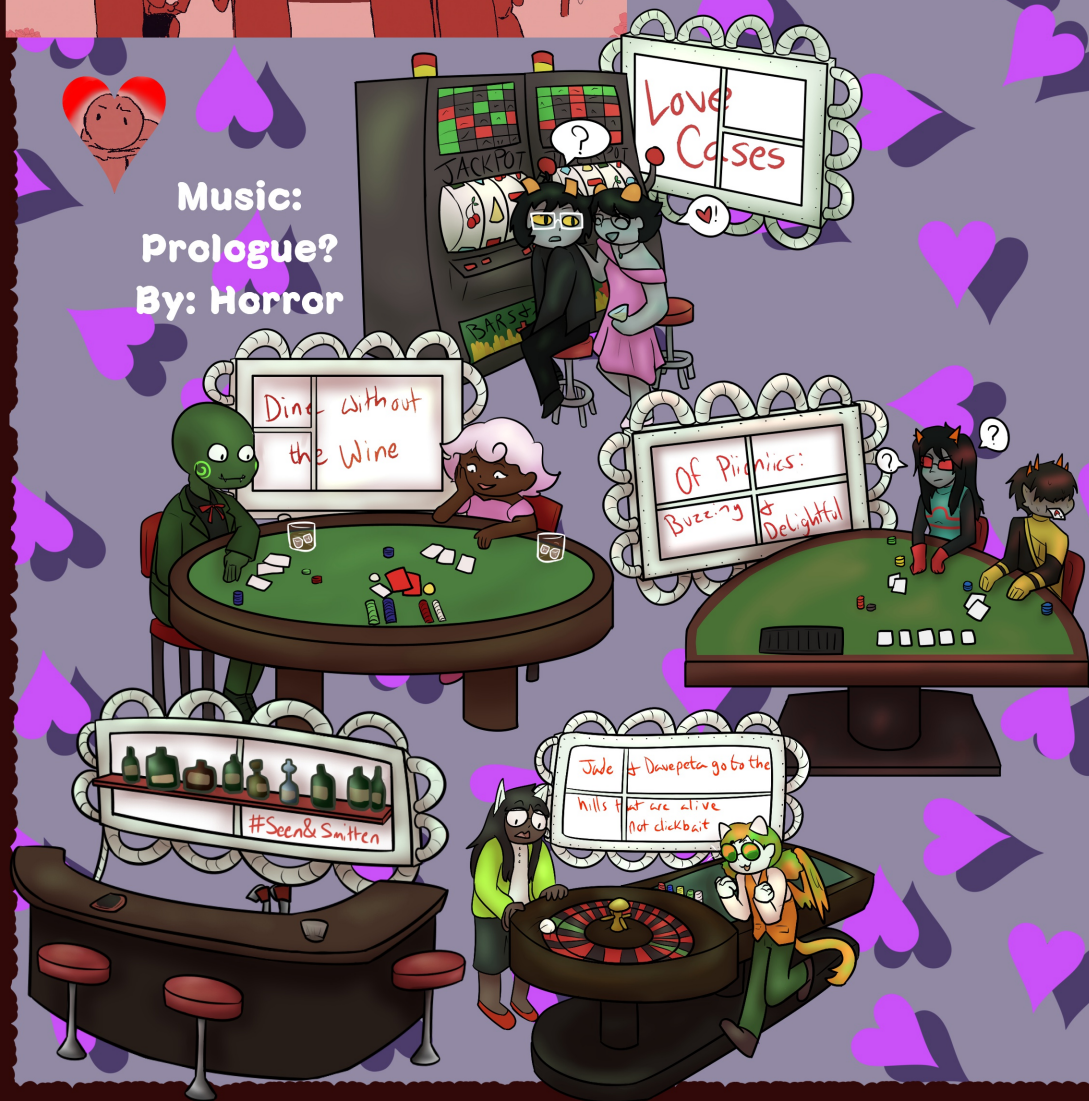
Heart of the Cards

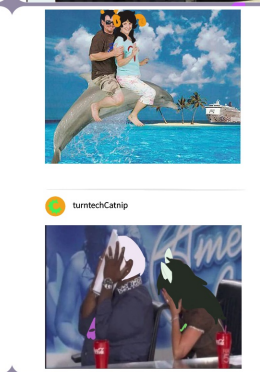
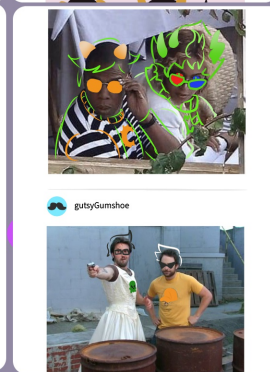
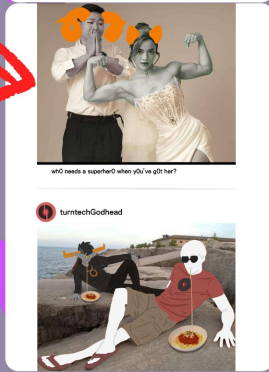
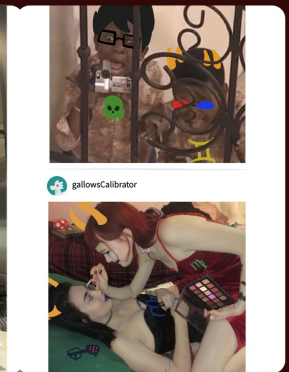
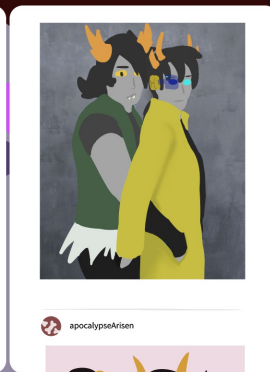
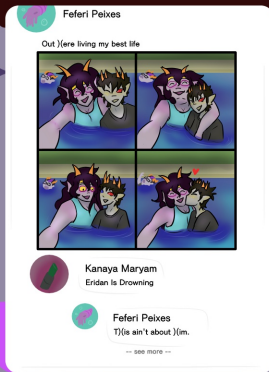


Cover/Title Screen
By: Liv

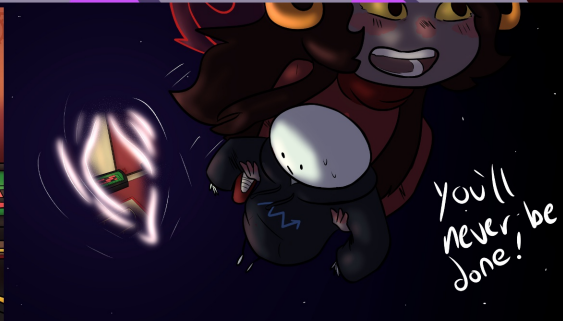
By: Ifer!

Music:
Prologue?
By: Horror





Epilogue By: Ifer

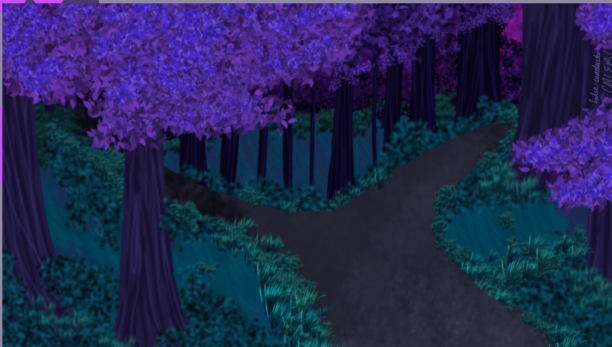


of Piicnics: Buzzing



Writing By: Sollux

**Backgrounds By:
Caleb**



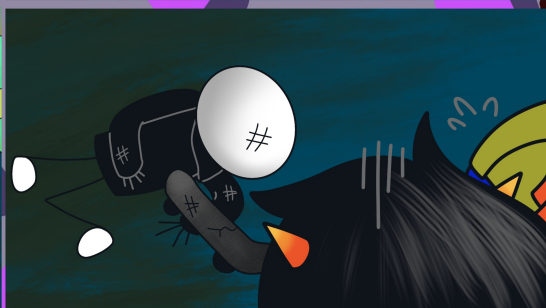
**Music:
Love Game
By: Horror**

and Delightful

Sprites By: Dal



End Cards By: Ørvar



Dine Without the Wine

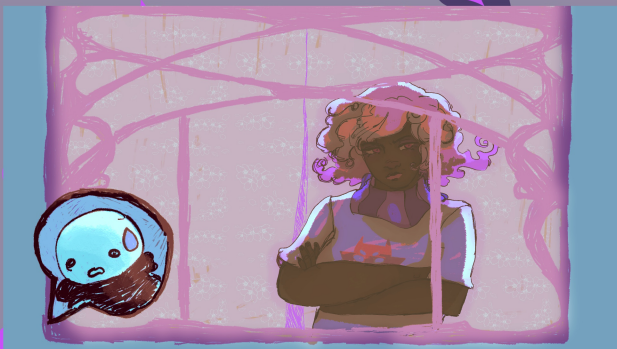


Backgrounds
By: Pema

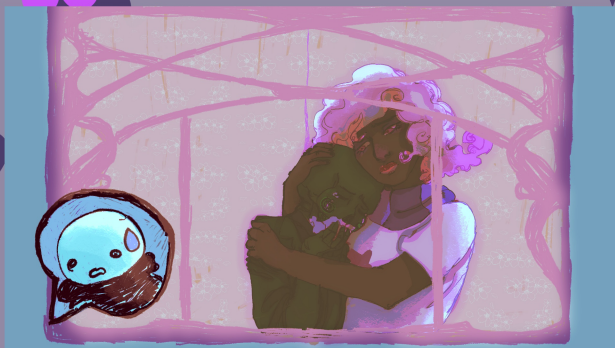


Sprites By: Eddie

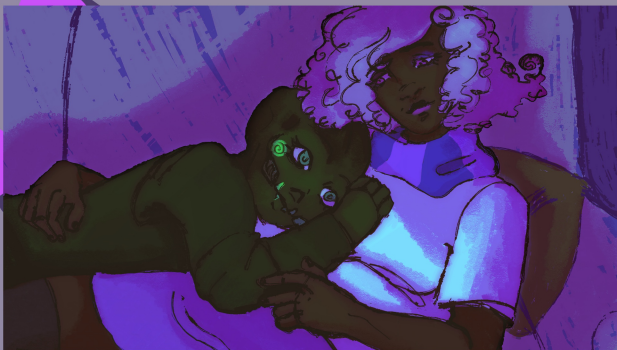
Writing By: Sollux



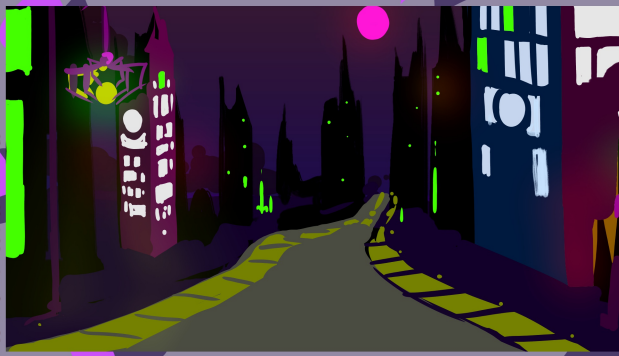
**End Cards
By: Pheonix**



**Music:
Nightlight
By: Horror**



Love Cases



Sprites By: Meteor



Backgrounds
By: Miles



Writing By:
Allison & Rue

End Cards
By: Pema



Music:
Wrong side of
the recuperacoön
By: Horror

Jade and Davepeta go to the hills that are alive not clickbait

Music:

Divertimento

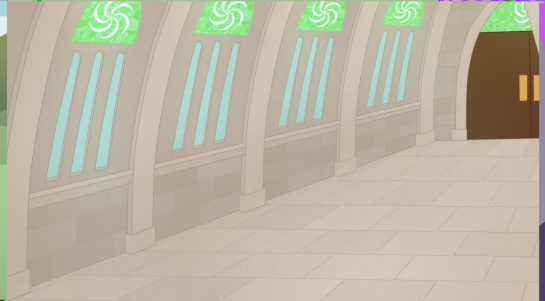
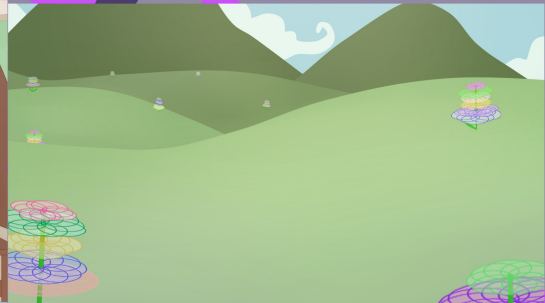
By: Horror

End Cards

Backgrounds

By: Vanessa

By: Pheonix



Sprites By: Quinn

Writing
By: Liv

